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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 012732

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DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/MTS, EAP/RSP, PM/RSAT, PM/SNA (LOFTIS),
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SUBJECT: EAP DAS ERIC JOHN'S MEETING WITH BG DADI SUSANTO

Classified By: Political Officer Daniel Turnbull, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a meeting with Indonesian Director General for Defense Strategy Susanto on October 18, EAP DAS Eric John raised U.S. human rights concerns, the need for continued military vetting and accountability for past abuses, the importance of a SOFA in underpinning bilateral cooperation and U.S. interest in holding a regional multilateral humanitarian relief exercise with Indonesia and other ASEAN countries. John described the overall relationship as being on track but stressed progress on issues must continue. Susanto characterized bilateral military cooperation with the U.S. as positive, acknowledged U.S. human-rights concerns, explained Indonesian budgetary limitations and competing national spending priorities and expressed support for the proposed regional exercise provided it was not perceived to be directed against China. He urged greater U.S. use of soft rather than hard power in the Middle East and greater U.S. military attention to Islamic custom with respect to dead civilians and soldiers in conflict areas such as Iraq. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) EAP DAS Eric John discussed the U.S. policy priorities concerning the Indonesian military with Indonesian Ministry of Defense (DEPHAN) Director for Defense Strategy BG Dadi Susanto on October 18 in Jakarta. Both interlocutors described U.S.-Indonesian relations as positive and moving in the right direction. Noting that restrictions on Indonesia had finally been removed in the most recent U.S. assistance budget, John stressed that while the overall framework of the relationship was satisfactory, both sides had to ensure that progress continued to be made on U.S. policy concerns. Describing U.S.-Indonesian military cooperation as developing "very fast" in the past three years, Susanto said he would work to keep the "good news" coming on those concerns. Susanto cited the annual Bilateral Defense Dialogue (BDD) and Security Dialogue (IUSSD) as registering the progress which had occurred in that time. There were no political obstacles to military cooperation with the United States, he averred, on the Indonesian side.

LIMITED MILITARY BUDGET AND COMPETING PRIORITIES

13. (C) Susanto said Indonesia's military budget was still very limited, totaling less than one percent of GDP and equivalent to only 60 percent of Singapore's and 20 percent of Australia's military spending. The Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) received \$2.8 million, or only 49 percent, of the \$5.8

million necessary to meet "minimum essential needs." The TNI supported the priority the government placed on meeting the nation's educational and health needs first, and would have to await stronger growth in the Indonesian economy before military spending was likely to catch up. In the meantime, the TNI relied on regional budgets to supply the other 51 percent. Indonesia would have to postpone major purchases of defense equipment until budgetary resources improved. On the positive side, Indonesia did not feel threatened within the region, owing to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and other bilateral security arrangements, including one recently concluded with Australia and one soon to be completed with Singapore. Indonesia did not object to the purchase of new planes by Singapore.

14. (C) More important in the immediate term, Susanto stressed, was the acquisition of equipment to meet commercial and humanitarian challenges. Indonesia suffered billions of dollars in national economic losses annually from its inability to patrol its territory and waters from illegal fishing, illegal logging and similar activities. Ships and planes to monitor and interdict these activities were thus a priority. Transport for disaster relief and humanitarian operations were also high on the list.

PROPOSED ARF HUMANITARIAN RELIEF EXERCISE: CHINA SENSITIVE

15. (C) John said the USG understood and supported these priorities, along with interoperability and multilateral cooperation. On that note, John stressed, EAP Assistant Secretary Hill wanted to move forward with a proposal he had

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made earlier to Indonesian Foreign Minister Wirajuda to hold a regional multilateral humanitarian relief exercise in the context of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Susanto said

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Indonesia supported the idea and had no objections to either multilateral or bilateral exercises of this nature. Indonesia and Singapore were laying the basis for beginning military cooperation on land, air and sea. Indonesia would want to ensure that the exercise remained purely "military" and did not become "political." China would be sensitive to any regional multilateral military activities with the United States from which China was excluded. It was therefore essential that the exercise not be identifiable with any specific country or feature in the region. He noted China was pressing for an ASEAN-Plus-One dialogue and cooperation. John observed that such objections usually originated elsewhere than from defense departments, and suggested the event could be discussed further at the upcoming meeting of the ARF Intersessional Support Group on Confidence Building Measures and Preventive Diplomacy on Batam Island, which the United States would chair. Susanto said he would attend the meeting.

SOFA: AN APPROPRIATE AND NECESSARY STEP

16. (C) Observing that the United States and Indonesia had recently conducted a successful initial round of talks toward a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), John said USG was well aware how sensitive the issues could be for host nations, including allies. When completed, however, SOFAs helped show respective capitals and publics how close cooperation had become. Moreover, SOFAs were necessary in order to make the military relationship work properly. Susanto replied that Indonesia had never had a SOFA before and that the topic was "something very new for us." The U.S. embargo on military cooperation with Indonesia had only recently been lifted, so this was also a big step in a short time. Some Indonesian legislators and public interest groups opposed a U.S. presence on Indonesian soil. Criminal jurisdiction in particular was extremely sensitive and would be "almost impossible" for the national legislature to accept in writing. Indonesia had no desire to prosecute U.S. soldiers,

but the provision would be seen as exempting U.S. soldiers from liability. Indonesia was grappling with its own attempt to delineate military from civilian justice under Indonesian law, and Indonesia's security negotiations with Singapore had encountered the same problem.

17. (C) John reiterated that the United States had encountered these sensitivities even with allies, for very understandable reasons. The United States and Indonesia should work together closely, he proposed, on a public relations campaign to overcome these concerns. DEPHAN was in the best position to step out publicly and take the lead in this effort. Noting that the Indonesian public's view of the United States was still very poorly informed, Susanto suggested that public attitudes would change over time as bilateral cooperation produced visible results. U.S. disaster relief in Aceh, Yogyakarta and elsewhere in the past two years had demonstrated real, concrete military cooperation and had made a very favorable impression on the Indonesian public. In this respect, the tsunami had been a "blessing in disguise" allowing the two militaries to work "side by side" for several months. Pursuing a "perfect" SOFA now, he averred, would fail. Rather, the two sides should begin with a more basic arrangement which, as public attitudes matured, could become more "solid." The SOFA should be a "work in progress" which could be upgraded over time line, in line with the relationship's growth. John stressed the two sides should work toward the best possible SOFA now, rather than later.

UNIFIL CONTRIBUTION

18. (C) John thanked Susanto for Indonesia's contribution to UN peacekeeping forces for Lebanon. This was an important statement and involved a significant burden on national resources. Susanto said the majority of Indonesia's UNIFIL troops would be Muslim but would also include some Christian, Hindu and Buddhist soldiers. In accordance with the national policy of Pancasila, Indonesian forces would seek to remain neutral in Lebanon. Susanto said no Brunei forces were would accompany the Indonesian battalion.

VETTING

19. (C) John said USG appreciated DEPHAN's cooperation to complete the necessary human-rights vetting for UNIFIL and

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other military activities. This was essential in order to maintain U.S. public support for cooperation. Indonesia's continued compliance would help to keep this issue from obstructing military cooperation. Susanto suggested the process could be improved. Vetting should be completed further in advance; last-minute denials were embarrassing. The process should also be more fair. "Almost everyone in the TNI, including the President," could be considered "guilty by association with Battalion number 744 in East Timor," he stated. It was "not right" that some who committed no abuses but happened to be there at the wrong time were blackballed. Not everyone who went to East Timor committed violations. Susanto cited a close colleague, a colonel, who had been denied the position of military attache because he had been transferred from Bali to East Timor five days before the massacres began there in 1991. Susanto said he was absolutely sure this officer, who had even paid for the education of several East Timorese children, was not guilty of human-rights abuses.

ACCOUNTABILITY

110. (C) John said that two recent TNI promotions in a list of 32 had raised U.S. concern. These were BG Muhamad Noer Muis, to become Infantry Division 1 Commander of TNI Special Forces (Kopassus), and MG Zamroni, to become Commander of Military Area XVII (Trikora) in Papua. This was a sensitive issue which, although Indonesia might wish to regard it as an internal matter, deeply concerned USG and had generated much

justifiable public criticism. This detracted from the progress being made in many other areas. Susanto replied that these two officers were not guilty according to Indonesian law and that it was therefore difficult to deny them a promotion which they had earned. Still, he understood USG concerns and noted that the two officers would remain in their positions for at least one year before being moved to new assignments.

INDONESIAN CONCERNS

¶11. (C) Susanto said that, in his view, Indonesia's leading concern regarding U.S. policy was its tendency to use hard rather than soft power, especially in the Middle East. This made Indonesia's position more difficult. As the world's only superpower, the United States received much attention, which magnified the impact of negative consequences of its actions. The high number of casualties in Iraq, particularly among civilians, caused many to question the ideals behind U.S. intervention. Saddam Hussein had been a dictator, but post-Saddam casualties were now equally high. Susanto said he had also been surprised to learn from U.S. officers that, after three years in Iraq, U.S. forces reportedly had no Islamic clerics to ensure the handling of dead Iraqi soldiers and civilians according to Islamic law. The TNI had taken care, even in Aceh, to wrap the body of the deceased soldier or civilian, pray together and ensure timely burial. They were still human beings, and the respect for custom was important to the local population

¶12. (U) DAS John has cleared this message.
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